

BMT



As part of your treatment for cancer/leukaemia you received a Bone Marrow or Stem Cell Transplant. This is very intensive treatment and can in some cases be life threatening and because of this you will need regular medical follow up for the rest of your life. This fact sheet is intended to help you understand the sort of follow up you will need and why.

In order for your body to accept new bone marrow your own marrow had to be destroyed. This is most often done using a combination of high dose chemotherapy and radiotherapy to the whole body (total body irradiation TBI). Some transplants use high dose chemo alone. When your new marrow is accepted by your body it starts to produce all the new healthy blood cells you need. Unfortunately as well as destroying your bone marrow the chemo and TBI also have an effect on healthy cells and cause some damage.

The damage from the high dose chemo and TBI causes side effects at the time of the transplant but may also cause problems later on. This is why you must attend for regular check ups.

There are separate detailed Fact Sheets on each of these topics mentioned below on the Aftercure web site

Heart scans – routine echocardiograms (heart ultrasound) are necessary every few years as the chemo and TBI may damage your heart muscle.

Lung function - if you had TBI you will need to have lung function tests frequently (which may mean every year) whilst you are growing and then less frequently after that.

Hormone tests – TBI can cause several different hormone problems, for example it can affect your thyroid hormone and possibly your growth. There is a very detailed Fact sheet about this. You will often need to have a blood test whilst at the clinic to check hormone levels.

Liver and kidney function – sometimes you will need a blood test to check your liver and kidneys are working normally. You also need to have your blood pressure checked each year.

Eye tests – after TBI you are at risk of developing a cataract and need to have an eye test at the opticians every year

Dentist – chemo and TBI can damage developing teeth. You need to see a dentist regularly especially if you were a young child when you had your treatment.

Fertility – following a transplant normal sexual function is not affected but there are often problems with fertility. This is a very sensitive subject and you will be able to discuss this at the follow up clinic. An appointment at a fertility clinic can then be arranged to discuss this further, if this is what you want.

Second cancers – although this seems very unfair, after treatment for cancer there is an increased risk of a second cancer developing. This is due to a combination of factors including chemo, TBI and occasionally inherited factors. Skin cancers are the most common & it is important you always use sun block & keep a check on and report any moles that change in appearance or new ones that develop.

Psychological issues – after very intensive treatment & possible ongoing medical issues it can be difficult to cope with other stress. You may wish to discuss this at your clinic visit and seek advice.

Vaccinations and travelling abroad – this is mentioned in the main part of the Aftercure booklet. If you plan to travel to a country, where you need to have vaccinations before you go, you will need to ask advice to check if it safe for you to be given the vaccinations. Some live vaccines (e.g. yellow fever) are not recommended if you have had a transplant except in very special circumstances and only after specialist advice.

Your local clinic will advise you when you are due any of these tests, and make appropriate referrals to other services such as reproductive medicine/fertility.